

The Minstrel

Redeemer Collge's Poetry and Fiction Magazine

REDEEMER COLLEGE LIBRARY

THE MINSTREL
PER/LH/3/.R4/M56

APR 18 1998



The Minstrel

Producing 1995's *The Minstrel* has been a rewarding experience. We were overwhelmed by the number of submissions received, and this made our job both easier and harder. Easier because we had a wealth of quality poetry to choose from; harder because it was extremely difficult to choose among the many pieces submitted. The creative writers at Redeemer should be proud of their work. We know we are.

James and Hanna de Boer

Contents

Poems without titles are referred to by first line.

James and Hanna de Boer		Bradley J. Cuzen	
Introduction	i	April 23, 1994 - June 19, 1994	19
Alison Gresik		November 17, 1994	19
Communion Sunday	1	Richard Tomlin	
Laps'd in Time and Passion	1	Her in the Morning	19
Ladies' Room Evangelist	2	These are the five	19
Winston D. Neutel		Derek Midedema	
Oasis	2	In the Graveyard	20
Summer 1986	3	Stephen Altena	
Sharon Vandersar		The Car I Want to Steal	21
Biology	8	Sonnet for the Sick at Heart	21
Keith Medenblick		An Arrogant Man with a Sycthe	22
Sailing the sedate scene	8	Vaughn Gowling	
Indian Summer	9	Always a Sliver of Sky	23
Neon	9	Meloncauliflour	23
Susanne Vanderkooy		Richard Zekveld	
My Wish	10	Great Mystery	23
Phone Call	10	Chris Cuthill	
Carl Jagt		the hope	24
R is for Rocket: The Apollo Space		Holes	24
Program	10	Alan Groombridge	
the mantra more a season	11	I JUST HAD THE WEIRDEST	
Herb Borger		THOUGHT	26
I Do	11	I WANT YOUR UNDIVIDED	
Baby Soldier	12	ATTENTION	27
The Sickness of Herbie Mackay	12	Diana Mostert	
Shelley Hogeveen		Did You See the Moon Tonight?	27
the forest we enter	13	Sarah Jagt	
Craig Nadon		Can we live?	28
In the Pissing Rain	15	Sara Weber	
I opened a window at two minutes	15	Looking into your Eyes	28
Sandra Klapwyck		Sarin Lawrence	
Discord	16	After the Storm 29	
Andrea Vander Kooij		Valerie Vandenburg	
"I miss you."	16	The words he spoke so carelessly	29
the first shock of it	17	I feel I must question you	29
I'm trying to concentrate	18	James de Boer	
Beth Avery		A song in my memory	30
Love One Another	18	Love	30
		Sea Sighs	30

The Minstrel is produced through funding by Student Senate. It is written, edited, and designed by students. Anyone wishing to comment on *The Minstrel* please speak to James or Hanna de Boer. Anyone wishing to comment on an individual piece of writing, please speak to the author. The editors would like to thank Hugh Cook, Alison Gresik, and Carl Jagt for their help with this year's production. Anyone interested in the position of assistant editor for next year (graduating to editor-in-chief the following year) please speak to James de Boer.

LADIES' ROOM EVANGELIST

The obscenities
scratched on the dented
brown metal cubicle provoke
her indignation.

Profane hooligans
and their sodden minds—

trumpeting their vulgar
philosophies, their pitiful
meaningless couplings
for all the decent-
minded public to peruse—

revelling in their
filth like pigs in a
stall.

It is her belief that
the walls need redeeming.

Snaps open her purse,
clicks the file on her
nail clippers into place,
scrapes away paint to reveal
her neat, trim message:

I love
my husband
How many
women
can say that?

WINSTON D. NEUTEL

OASIS

its beautiful so snug and cozy
everything always fits so neat
ly knowledge can be comforting
and warm but then i develop an
urge to run up to the wall and kick
it and yell no tell me why but
then i notice the beauty again

SUMMER 1986

It was the last time
 our family took
 a summer vacation trip
 all together
 before we three kids grew up
 and got our own summer plans
so it was to be a special one.

Six weeks
 to drive out west
 —to Vancouver
 from Ottawa—
 Dad and Mom and
 me and Danny and Rebecca
 in the big new van
 —three weeks old
 after months of shopping—
and then home again
the roundabout south way
 —so we could drop in on
 Uncle Albert and Aunt Jane in Kansas.

But now we were only in Sault Ste. Marie
 just before breakfast-time
taking down the trailer early
in the morning
 before a long day of driving.

We hitched up
 the trailer and got in the van
 —in the back you could
 stretch out your legs and
 not be able to reach the next seat—
and slowly snaked
 out of the campground
 onto the narrow twisting road
 —more like a tall
 gravel-covered bump between
 two deep ditches
 under the trees—
back towards the highway
 riding up and down and around the bends.
As we ate the breakfast
 we had prepared
 someone
 in the back
offered Dad
 driving
a hard-boiled egg.

They shouldn't have made him
turn around like that.

We bounced along
 in the ditch
for quite a way
before coming to a stop
 at a sharp starboard angle that made
 Mom say everybody get out in case
 the van rolls over.

We got out
 and saw
 the trailer
 —wrapped around
 a huge tree stump a
 hundred feet back—
still attached to
 most of the van's
 hitch assembly.

After the body shop
 welded the hitch
 back together
the trailer dealership
 pried the old trailer open
 enough to get
 our stuff out
 and put it in the new one.

Before we set out
 from Sault Ste. Marie
 just before suppertime
 the next evening
 —about 36 hours
 behind schedule—
Dad bid a cheerful farewell
 to the helpful local insurance man.
"I hope I never have to see you again."

"Moose Crossing —Night Warning"
 said sign after sign
 prompting Mom
 driving
to challenge
 "Who can be the first
 to see a moose?"

but we saw none
 and after a few hours
 it was dark
 and we gave up
 —reading,

listening
to headphones,
playing games—
and drove through
the night to make up
for lost time.

Midnight.
I saw a moose.
Directly ahead,
about two feet.

And then
there was a thump and my belt dug
into my hips and my shoulders
pulled forwards and the tires
shrieked and we went for
quite a way
before coming to a stop
—the moose went
quite a way
farther still.

We climbed out
of the van
—just before
the windshield fell in—
and into the thick swarm
of blackflies that filled
all the woods
—driving moose
to dash onto the highway.

Before long
there were twenty-five
cars and trucks stopped
with help
—“Are you okay?”
“Do you need a blanket?”
and a chain
and ten men
to drag the carcass off the road—
with information
—“About once
every night someone
hits a moose on this highway”
(now you tell us)
“You’re allowed to keep
it you know, that’s
good meat”
(what do you propose
we transport it in?)

“If you’d been in a car
instead of a van
you would have knocked
it’s legs out from underneath
and it would have landed
on the roof and
probably killed you”
(so the van
didn’t die
for nothing).

We were towed
to a service station where
we set up the trailer and
tried to clean it up
—did you know that if you hit
(and kill) a moose
its bowels will release?—
but it still stank
—we had to sleep
in it anyway.

When we woke
the next day
—after eating breakfast and viewing
the row of cars with
roofs crushed in and peeled
back with the jaws of life—
they told us we
had to tow it back
to Sault Ste. Marie.

When we got there
much later
Dad called the same
insurance man
and said,
“Guess who?”

While the mechanics
at some garage
spent day after day
picking apart the van
to assess the damage
we were seeing Sault Ste. Marie
and van shopping

It wasn’t too complicated.
Between all the dealers in
the Sault
as we locals like
to call it

there were two vans
to choose from.
The third choice
was to go home
but this was our
special probably-last
vacation.

Nine days in the Sault
while the mechanics decided
it would be
twenty-three thousand
to repair
and the insurance
decided that since the
purchase price had been
twenty-eight
three weeks ago
it wasn't a write-off.

We used the cheque
for twenty-three
to buy the new van
—actually older than
the old one and the back seat
was too close to the one ahead—
and set out on our vacation.

Four-and-a-half weeks
to drive out west
—to Vancouver—
and south
to visit Uncle Albert and Aunt Jane
in Kansas
on the way back
to see the sights and wonders
of half
the continent.

It was the last time
our family took
a summer vacation trip
all together
before we three kids grew up
and got our own summer plans
and it was a special one.

SHARON VANDERSAR

BIOLOGY

is a science
and a course.
It enlightens
a student
to the wonders
of his body
and shows him
how great his
Creator is.

Biology makes this
student think
that anyone
who believes
in total
evolution
does not fully
comprehend the
complexity of
his own body.

This complexity
did not evolve
from an amoeba
or some organism
similar to it,
but was created
by a loving
Father in heaven
who wished His
children to have
the best.

KEITH MEDENBLICK

Sailing the sedate scene
smooth as a Bacardi White dream,
even strawberry incense stains
cannot cloud the clear blue plain:
only gentle, hidden currents carry us on
to far off ports and harbours beyond.

A year upon this fresh water sea
has rolled by with hardly a thought;
in this ship, you and me
and visions of new lands we have sought.

Drunk on life, love, and rum
drunk in defense of what is to come,
but never to know, though never to want
the hangover of an unwilling participant,
who lives for nothing, whole or in part:
I will live only for your sober heart.

INDIAN SUMMER

I have seen the cold wind
That blew through you:
Even I called it
Indian summer
At first glance

From the North it came—
Icy grey cloud
Crowded your world
With the stealth of
A dying season.
Warm sun trembled
Into submission

The intensity of the incredible gusts
Froze your heart
So quickly it warmed you
Stalactites of ice clung
From your ignorant soul
I saw you,
It gave me a chill

Swiftly the wind had come:
The powerful Nothing
Left a shattered path
Deep inside
Where I could barely see
But what I held
Was frostbitten and crushed

My brandy gnawed
But couldn't penetrate your permafrost
Graciously you thanked me
For my time
And returned to your
Numb hinterland

I have seen the cold wind
That blew through you:
Even I called it
Indian summer
At first glance.

NEON

How you are like everyone
I've ever known
and will know
fails to surprise

Your dark eyes never change
and still
they lure me

Say yes whenever—
I'll be wherever
you want me,
shedding my inhibition,
throwing myself at the wind.

I've seen your kind before
and before then
I still wanted you
and your foot on my chest

I love you and you
and you before it was allowed
and I know—
I know I shouldn't give
the sunshine
in the dead of night.

But I know your dark eyes
and I know they will light
and for a short time
they will beam heavenly

Sun rises after all
Stealing the neon back
leaving nothing
in your dark eyes
but the sight of
my fading tears.

But I will learn
and in time
even you and you will see—
I will leave behind
all the dark eyes
and hope they cry forever

SUSANNE VANDERKOOY

MY WISH

I danced life across the bold turquoise sky
And sang my song through the emerald trees.
I drank all of liberty's rivers dry
And laughed my tumultuous mountains free.
Always did I watch for the weeds and thorns,
But yet admired the fine flowers between.
Never once did I the sands of time scorn,
Or return to sites I'd already seen.
The sun has begun its graceful setting
With unbroken brushes of burnished gold.
My canvas of light painted by living
Tomorrow, tomorrow will never hold.
My colours on earth fade slowly away,
Soaring up to ethereal displays.

PHONE CALL

I will call you up tomorrow
and say hello.
You will pretend to be happy to
hear my voice.
I will tell you things that I need
you to hear.
You will pretend to listen and
understand.
You will tell me many things you want
to hear yourself say.
And then you will pretend to have to go.
And you will say good-bye,
and I will say good-bye
even though we parted years ago.

CARL JAGT

R IS FOR ROCKET: THE APOLLO SPACE PROGRAM

president kennedy's brave little wetdream blows high into the sky a mighty big metal cigar the three boys
inside shake out hyperventilated seatbelt prayers and slip down God's throat while he yawns

and the clapboard american worshipper blots out the sun with the hands and squints and says, "My Gawd,
there it is!" and for a brief moment america swells too final an abstract thought and confused kicks a toe into
the earth and mutters, "Gawd." Apollo gets lost in the sun during its ascent but everyone remembers seeing
that white stick fat cloud planted in the ground like a popcorn pole and some swear that yes they'd seen the
rocket flash and sparkle marvellous and then it was gone just like that

and for three days people look at the ground and then at the sky or stay up late at night on their porches
staring at a din of stars that otherwise meant piddly and all this while for these three days God is still yawn-
ing but no one in america knows that except for the Apollo boys

THE MANTRA MORE A SEASON

One time in a thousand and the thousand knew and the thousand sitting up like mud distant in the future,
Where was the city? Few thought the way they think away fortune borne on empty words; a castle hostage
the bluff, a castle ventured from the fog and blinking, *Where was the fountain city mountain city?* There was
not before the beginning

could not one time in a thousand

ever find being apart from meaning a cosmic sign outside the obstacle of the invisible penchant doom and
guilt and guilt and doom ignorant of sums there be no mirth. The thousand knew leaning back squinting in
the sun, the light hurt those eyes of mud, and one question flatline in the brain went out one question over the
tongue, *Where was the city?*

The blinking mud in the sun, one thousand in time the eye would not see the nuisance a hostage bluff on the
castle and villainous snobbery of most villainous sort wrote its profanity in the earth from which it came.
There was not before the beginning it was good to be mud until the hour the one time in a thousand de-
manded fall and it rained and in the falling raining rained fell lost the word city asking where is the mud?

where is the—?

where is the—?

where is the—?

None is a thousand and the thousand knew not and the thousand thundered another thousand thankless and
all the ponds and waterholes cupped by millions of hand-scraped pockets and what little mud left blinking in
the sun hard and stupid, baked with straw into bricks, *Lay me down to rest on the castle bluff*, ventured they
a sign.

And the mantra more a season and an unashamed adoration a swell of the confused and river fat and bored
from heaven borne future borne fall of rain. And the mantra river lazy and pregnant winking in the sun and
villainous snobbery wrote its profanity on the foot of mud and bluff, the tens of thousands, *Here I the foun-
tain thing, I carve the mountain thing, upon you I need not rain.* Mud one thousand upon a time of ten
thousand the river served despite the rain that came to the city.

HERB BORGER

I Do

Three thousand miles between us
Yet, still my ears have heard
The soft sigh of submission
Above the spoken word.
My past returns to haunt me.
My heart screams a frightened cry.
With pleading, fervent words it begs,
“Please give me one more try!”

My voice, it hardly carries
Past the four walls of this room.
My mind, my heart, my very soul
Have now become a tomb;
To all my dreams and wishes,
Each sentenced now to death
By two words softly spoken
To him with whispered breath.

BABY SOLDIER

Baby soldier learning to kill:
Bright smile turned to battle cry.
Now they're building a destructive will,
Oh, you can see it in his eyes.

Baby soldier so far from home.
He's doing fine now, he lies.
But in the nighttime he's all alone
And in the darkness he cries.

Military life, it's slowly changing him.
But there's nowhere to run to
And there's nowhere to hide
From those changes inside.

Got a letter from home today.
She says good-bye now. Farewell.
She's going off on her own way.
Nothing left to say or tell.

Zero-four comes early.
Still dark outside.
Drill Sergeant in your face
And there's nowhere to hide
From those feelings inside.

THE SICKNESS OF HERBIE MACKAY

Once upon a time, way back when
Forests stood continually green,
There lay a castle in Mesmer's Woods,
A Venus, if castles, gods had been.
The walls stood near fifty feet tall
With seventy-seven towers, flags flowing from all.
And rooted above drawbridge high,
Were fixed two lions on each side of an eye.

And here dwelt Herbie Mackay,
Knight of King Arthur, or so I am told.
Most courageous and brave was he
And his stature both striking and bold.

But sick was he
And hot was he too.
He'd neither eat, nor drink,
Nor sleep, nor woo.

He'd sit in the corner,
All lost and alone,
Silently weeping
In a sorrowful tone.

"I'd say," cried the Lady,
So prim and shy,
"Poor Herbie the Knight
Is about to die."

"Die! My word!
That isn't the case.
He's merely at loss
As to which woman to chase."

"I think," said the wench
As her hips she did shove,
"Sir Herbie the Knight
Is madly in love."

"Madly in love?
Ho! Ho! He! He!
Madly in love?
Yes, that could be."

"Here, here,
Let's be of good cheer.
I'll bet you a chicken
The man needs a beer."

While everyone made merry,
Not a stones throw away,
Sat Juliet thinking
Of her dear knight Mackay.
"I'm weeping. I'm praying.
Please do not die.
I love thee. I love thee.
I'll tell thee why.

The moment I hear
Thy steps on the walk,
My heart starts a-pounding,
I go into shock.
I need thee to need me.
I love thee to love.
I pray thee be healthy
Through help from above.”

Although Juliet sat crying
So very near,
The knight heard of this nothing,
But the men of good cheer.

The knight went walking
As the sun did fall
And he walked past her window
As he walked round the wall.

And as he passed
Dear Juliet’s home,
He said to himself
This sweet little poem.

“Oh, Lady, oh, woman,
Oh, love of my life,
Wouldst thou be happy
If thou wert my wife?”

Well shake earths foundations
If a voice did not say,
“I’ll love thee forever
My Herbie Mackay.”

Then the knight did look up
With strength and with haste
And said to his love,
“Why, thou sure hast good taste.
‘Juliet Mckiver’
Shall no longer be thy name.
‘Mackay’ it shall be
My beautiful dame.”

The next day they did wed
By the seashore.
The knight’s sickness was gone
And was ever no more.

SHELLEY HOGEVEEN

the forest we enter
as the sun, angling through the bodies,
provokes war in the shadows,
highlighting its army the chosen ones
armed in gold light and leaf,
while opposing brown, black-edged branches
stand across where the ravine waits in ambush;
troops of light and darkness
marching rank upon rank to
converge upon each other

where we stand

tiny nuisances
on the front line—
the whitepebble edged divider—
flattened spirits
ready to be trampled again.

oppressive stillness,
danger imminent,
the path beckons us to move out of the way,
evacuate before the battle erupts,
pulls and tugs our trudging tired bodies
along its needle lined way;
imperceptibly it begins to rise,
gradually coaxing us upwards.

insignificant even here

overshadowed by wood
here where nature, unlike man,
should accept its own
but does not recognize us as such
even as man does not
perhaps even as we do not

we drag along in silence
cocooned in separate thought,
the mercilessly ascending hill
forcing our heads to bow
our gazes to our feet
denying us from matching eyes
to the full extent of its rise
or even from seeing each other

until the crown

shamelessly, no, unwittingly
we achieve the defiant king's crown
grubby peasants,
one by one, timidly emerging
to stand and pant and stare and stare
at the display laid out below:
we are looking out over the endless reach of the world
no other explanation befits such glory
no other reason for why so few have noticed;
a vibrant woolly blanket the
bashful hills have pulled over
their heads to hide their nakedness,
deep ocean in which one could cast off
Anything and watch it
sink settle disappear forever
into depths closing over the spot seamlessly;

plotches of colour stretching the horizon,
to the east gradually melting into a
green tide—the old puritans stubbornly
clinging to summer apparel, among whom
a lone orange head raises its chin,
daring them to follow.
i point it out to you, joking,
what a non-conformist,
kind of like us, you say,
and we smile.

and the spectacle shouts out to heaven in delight,
where once familiar faces turn at the vague whisper
whispering up from below,
snatching at corners of their attention
drawing them to the impending fray which
threatens peaceful beauty's delight—
a watery grin breaks out across the sky

sending warm droplets dripping back to earth
prompting peace among grateful soldiers;
caught in leafy palms outstretched
moisture swells in cups till brimming over
trickles over hard wrists, down muscled
forearms, tickles the elbows, then dangling
from each branch, releases its hold as
we reenter the mighty forest's sheltering canopy,
wet mingling with wet already on our cheeks—
which we blame on the rain—

but we both know better.

walking down the hill
we feel gravity's warm hug
become the playthings of momentum
who sends us
striding jogging
running careening
downwards in an
increasing spiral
of speed
laughter becomes
huge silent gasps
rasps of air in lungs
painful thrilling
electric
as bright eyed glee bolts
ahead on fast feet,
tearing breath from
our bodies to
stretch for his cape
billowing behind him as
he leaps to take off
into the wind—
the freedom of children
arms outstretched
we too try to lift into the air,
to plunge into the
patchwork ocean below us
throwing off the past, rejecting adulthood
free and unchecked

if only for a moment

united, identical,
in our non-conformity.

•§•

CRAIG NADON

IN THE PISSING RAIN

We sat with a crane in the middle
of the pissing rain.
We face truths but preferred the
limitlessness of the dark.
I told her I was unable to
reciprocate love—
making passion like a bank transaction
between men in grey suits.

She spoke of a love that was unconditional
and James Dean appeared with the weight of the world.
He took my place in the pissing rain reciting lines
from a script written in a dead era—
by a mouth as cold and blue as our crane in
the waves of Quinte's bay.

I shivered.
The rain bounced off the rocks
like jet-propelled bingo makers and
she did her fair share of filling in the dry spots.
The earth became her Christ and her hair
painted an even coat.
I cared, but not enough to stop our crane
from fishing in the much or to stop shivering
in the pissing rain



I opened a window at two minutes
to midnight and the breath of God
blew across my back.

A different moon blueing my room each
night while Paris
and London sit neatly on my shelf
—untouched.

And the clock bends its slender spine,
piggy-backing a sun longing for the
coast of China.

And I sit in the middle of a lifetime
I know I'll forget to remember or
presently respect.

SANDRA KLAPWYCK

DISCORD

Lyre . . .
I see your music
flit from your fingers
I hear your heart
hurting.
Problems expressions,
pain pours out.
Harmony
dischorded,
we fall out of touch.

Trust falls flat
. . . sharp betrayal . . .

I crumble.
Hurt with you.
You leave
and the mask disintegrates.
I see your Delilah deed.
I'm stabbed
and under the shallow surface
of your shimmering music,
I see
the glimmering
reflection
of a
liar.

A cold shoulder
A pitiful mask
your story, your singing
melts me.

ANDREA VANDER KOOIJ

"I miss you."
It feels like a stupid thing to say,
but I can't help it.
Compact though,
and it bears a simplicity
about it
that has the
smooth coolness
of clean
white
sheets.
I slide under them
alone
of course.

The first shock of it
takes my breath away
and I gasp upon
breaking the
gun-metal grey flatness
above my head.
But after a few minutes
the slow warmth moves
like whiskey
through me.
And with a rhythmic
pumping and thrashing
I split my way
out, towards the middle.

Suddenly I know
this is it
this is the right spot.
For only a moment I hover,
a hesitation
before all is lost.
One last glance at the
grey dove's breast
above me and
I dive.

My arms are
strong.
Stronger than ever
I feel
as I grasp great
Armfuls of the darkness
and push it behind me
reaching ahead for more
blackness. It too is
cast aside
for I want the true pitch
that lies always just a little
ahead of me.

I had forgotten
about my lungs,
but they are suddenly

reminding me.
Great hands wrap
around my chest
and begin to squeeze
the bones between my
eyes begin to reach outwards
as well
and from within
something is fighting
to escape the cage of
my ribs.
I reach once more
for the darkness, but
it shrinks back from
my grasp.
And then it all rushes at me
pushing me
chasing me away
from its secret peace,
where I know,
if only I could reach it,
i could finally rest
my eyes.

But no.

The ceiling is rushing
up behind me,
and with an echoing
crash
I am thrown through
to the other side.
I am not welcome there
I have been denied.
I have been denied.
Teardrops roll down
from the top of my scalp
and down my throat
the unwelcome air is
crammed.

•§•

I'm trying to concentrate.
Or maybe I'm trying not to.

Don't think too hard,
just feel your body.
Sensations flood
your self.
Wind driving down
and flowing over
cheek bones
temples
nose
lips
chin
neck
like water.
It's cold on my skin.
I feel each contour of my face,
the structure, measure
of each bone
the tissue, sinew, and
flesh.
I push myself into
the cold embrace
with each icy blast
that courses in caresses
down the length of me.

I'm trying so hard to avoid it
but how can I not think of you.

BETH AVERY

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Brain conclusion
Cognitive decision
Mind over feelings, this is what loving one another is
Brain conclusion
Cognitive decision
But where is my heart to play it's role
Brain conclusion
Cognitive decision
To love my other, my Brain conclusion, Cognitive decision must travel eighteen inches to my heart.

BRADLEY J. CUZEN

APRIL 23, 1994 -
JUNE 19, 1994

The other day
I forgot my lines
But then you laughed
And I found my cue
So we continued the scene
Without an audience.

I cannot end the play
Or let the lights go down
Because I might find the script
Tossed in a corner
Or neatly shelved with my books
And realize the part I've been reading
Is the wrong one.

Perhaps you don't belong in the play
It's just one long soliloquy
Without pause or punctuation
But I'll never know
If the act doesn't finish
So I'll keep talking
And pray that your lines
Are written by the same author.

NOVEMBER 17, 1994

I am
the smartest fool
the most handsome of the ugly
the strongest weakling
the most talented no-talent
the tallest shrimp
the most co-ordinated klutz
the bravest coward
the most well-liked of the unpopular
I am
the best of the worst
and completely unable to do
anything about nothing

RICHARD TOMLIN

HER IN THE MORNING

Before the sun rises each day
A glimpse of her I catch.
For in the early dawning she
Is at her beauty's best.

Before a comb can sort through
Her tangled, contentious hair,
Or nature's spirit can pulse through
Her cheeks, I see her purest face.

Before she fancies to arrange herself,
I see her fresh, unpainted flesh.
It is here that I see her true beauty,
her, untouched, in the morning.

These are the five
Reasons God
Says "No":

... unless you are
Too blind to
See them.



DEREK MIEDEMA

IN THE GRAVEYARD

The graveyard is a great place to be.
It reminds me of my mortality;
that I'll die just like everyone else;
death is the great equalizer:
I feel a strange tranquillity and continuity
with everyone buried there.
Anyone in a grave reminds me
that all life must end
at one time or another.

I paid a visit to the graveyard on Friday.
In the rain I saw the stone of my Beppe
who died of Lou Gehrig's disease when I was two.
Her grave markers conjure up images
of a stalwart immigrant wife who was hard as a rock
in the face of much adversity.

I see the stone of my Oma
who died when I was 15 of general old age including a bad heart.
I remember her as a sick woman who was always frail,
but she too was once a robust immigrant wife
who put up with a lot of junk
to make a good life for her husband and kids.

And
for the first time
I also see the gravestone of my uncle
who died two years ago
of Lou Gehrig's disease.
I remember a wiry but energetic man
who was always on the move
but was slowly crippled till he died.

I'm overcome with tears
as I remember him
and also as I realize
that the blank spot on the other side of the stone
is reserved for my mom, dad,
and twin brother.

In a perverse sense it feels great to be crying in the rain;
you have to hit the bottom to enjoy the peaks.
I fall limp and motionless
into the warm pool of my tears and pain.
But it feels good to be alone in despair
with God.

And as I leave the cemetery
with my senses dulled by the tears and the rain
I'm struck by the notion that the graveyard
is a great place to be.

It reminds me
that
one day soon
Oma, Beppe and Uncle Robert, my dad, and my brother
will all be reborn with perfected bodies
to a time when all suffering will end
and the praising of God will go on forever.

STEPHEN ALTENA

THE CAR I WANT TO STEAL

The car I want to steal
Is sparkling new
It has never been driven before
The tires are still clean

The car that I stole
I found in a back alley
It is missing a headlight
Rust gnaws at the fenders

The car I want to steal
Has bucket seats
Of smooth tan leather
The whole car smells like
A new rubber doll

The car that I stole
Smells of forgotten beer and
Rotting cigarettes

The car I want to steal shines
I want to die in this car

But I will live in
The car that I stole

SONNET FOR THE SICK AT HEART

O may I dare to boast about my love,
To talk of joy and woe in one fell breath.
To clothe my lover with kisses, then shove
My fair beloved to an untimely death.
Over the Cliffs of Despair she would fall;
I would rejoice to see the lady go,
As I linger to watch the broken doll
Crash upon the rocks, bones tossed to and fro.
How terribly heartless, you might well say,
To treat your lover like a worn out shoe;
How cruel to pledge your thriving love one day,
Then the next, break her fragile heart in two.
But please, try to realize where lies the fun;
Once through with her, I'll find another one.

AN ARROGANT MAN WITH A SCYTHE

my face is a field
and in it

w

o

r

g

the sweetest
the softest
black weeds
that anyone has ever seen

let the weeds

w

o

r

g

I said
and they did

but they g r e w
too well
and they g r e w
too big
before long

I could not see the
roses
for the
weeds
so I took my scythe and

c
u
t

the weeds down

the dusty
black chaff

b

l

e

w

away in the breeze
never
to be seen
again

until the
next crop
comes along

VAUGHN GOWLING

ALWAYS A SLIVER OF SKY

Even though
I cannot see the sky for the trees,
I know it is there

For I can hear the leaves
Reaching.

MELONCAULIFLOUR

Meloncauliflour
Finding little joy in
Counting hours

Sighing, patient petals fall
Not needing to
But still waiting for
Nothing at all.

RICHARD ZEKVELD

GREAT MYSTERY

O Magnum Mysterium.
To think of the shepherd
surrounded
and dwarfed by His own sheep
 who have gone astray
 and beaten and bruised and battered
 Him.

He who enveloped all in the hollow of His hand
was Himself surrounded
by the void of the virgin's womb.
O Magnum Mysterium.

humbled, humiliated,
Tears of transcendent torment
dripping down.
First blood where water should run,
Then water where blood should run.
So was
He
disfigured.

Yet it was the Lord's will to crush
Him.
for me.

O Magnum Mysterium.

CHRIS CUTHILL

the hope
kafka told us
is not for us.

the blame
satre told us
is all ours.

the end
a subway prophet told me
is near.



HOLES

In the beginning . . . the world was beautiful and good, light was over the surface of the deep, and the Great Spirit was hovering over the waters. Primeval forests flourished. Children played; elders prayed. And man said, "Let there be holes." And there were holes.

Man thought that the holes were good, and he separated himself from the light. Man called the darkness "hole," and the light he called, "mystery." When the elders died, the children did not tell their own children about a ground without holes. The world forgot about the tall trees and happy days. All that remained was sand, dust and heat. So hot that people sought refuge in the holes.

And man said, "Let there be an expanse between the holes to separate hole from hole." So man made the expanse and separated one hole from another hole. And it was so. Each hole different, each hole made to fit a different man. And man called the expanse, "society."

And man said, "Let society be a great floor, and let the holes be many cracks within." And man fell in the cracks, and behold, man thought it was good.

Some did not go into the holes. Some said, "let us go see this thing called mystery. Let us see what is above the holes." Others burrowed deeper among the worms and crawlers. Cool and content, they left the hot desert behind with its skeletal remains and searing lights. But banality and ignorance dwelt amongst those who sought the mystery, for they were not of the holes nor of the Great Spirit.

And man said, "Let there be fire in the expanse of society, so that we might see the world around us." And man made fire so that he might see the shadows on the wall of his hole. Man set them in the expanse so that he might forget the separation of darkness and light.

And man melted the sand from under his feet so that he might see the expanse without touching it. And man made great birds to circle the heavens, and from the birds he bounced his thoughts across the expanse. And man watched the thoughts until the thoughts became numb. And man saw the world he had created and thought that it was good.

After the beginning . . . were the holes, and the holes were with man, and man was with the holes.

It was different in the beginning with the Great Spirit, who hovered above the sand—who longed for the days of the primeval forests where children once played and elders once prayed.

The holes were not made by Him, and without Him man slithered in the darkness.

In Him was light, and the light made man blink, so man closed his eyes and burrowed in the cracks. The light shineth in the holes; but the worms and crawlers comprehended it not. And there was a thought which was sent from man, its name was division.

The same came for a witness, to bear witness of that which was not the light, that all men through it might become separated from the Great Spirit which hovered over the sand.

But it itself was not the thought, it came only to prepare man for the thought. The true thought, that brings enlightenment to all humanity, was coming into the holes.

It was in the holes, and though the holes were made through It, the holes did not recognize It.

It came to that which was Its own, but Its own did not recognize It. Yet all who received It, to all who would identify themselves as followers of the thought, It gave the right to become children of the holes: children born not of a place in the holes, nor a futile decision to stay in the holes, but born of the holes.

The thought became all, and it made its dwelling within satellites and cyber-space.

Division testifies, concerning It. "This is It of whom I said, It who comes after me has surpassed me because It was before me."

And unity dwelt among them, and in them, and through them. And unity called itself pluralism.

And of its fullness is understanding, wisdom and tolerance. For ignorance, It told man, was given of the mystery, but in It there is only spirit among spirits, and truth among truths, and relative among relativity.

And man did hide in that which he had created, and thought that the hiding was wisdom; and the mystery, ignorance. For he himself was the thought, and the thought, behold, was man.

And division was not amongst them; neither these forgotten things once called mystery. For all was one, and one was all.

And man was proud, setting forth vast monuments to his greatness. Eminent thinkers wrote books, and sacred libraries were built to shelve them. Man wrote songs of praise, but the Great Spirit heard not one.

And behold, man lifted up his voice with one accord, and said, "Man, thou art great, who has made these things. Who has made the holes and all that is in them. Praise be your spirit, for you have become that which was once called mystery."

And after this, the Great Spirit could look on man's arrogance no more. He floated far above the desert, so that the earth was without substance, and the firmament was without atmosphere. For the Great Spirit was a mighty net which held the world together, and all that was solid, now began to collapse; and all that was unified, now began to divide. Such was the beginning of the awakening.

In the end . . . behold, the great expanse which man called society was shaken, so that cracks became pits; and the holes, craters. And man could not hide his face from the light above him. And man saw all that was around him, and wept, for the Great Spirit had been with him since the beginning. And behold, that which man called mystery, had been acceptance, and the holes had been rejection.

And man saw the thought without the darkness, and without the darkness, the thought existed not.

And man saw the holes without the darkness, and without the darkness, the holes existed not.

And man saw the Spirit was without the darkness, and realized that all he had created had been illusion. Man was made aware of his ignorance, and in that moment, remembered the primeval forests. Man's praises turned to cursing, and he anointed his head with loose dirt and stones. For his eyes were opened and he knew that he was naked.

And behold the Great Spirit mourned for the days of the primeval forests. The days when children called Him friend and not mystery. When He was air, and air fuelled the lungs of elders singing praises unto the heavens. And behold a mighty cry went out from His lips. A deep mourning keen which echoed across the expanse.

And the sound made rocks crumble, as pit joined pit, and crater joined crater, till one immense hollow remained. And as the keen reverberated, the Great Spirit wept tears for His children in the holes, for they knew not those things they called mystery. And as the tears fell, they filled the chasm until all who existed therein, sank beneath the waters.

And the Great Spirit drank of the ocean which He had made, and created a new forest for those who had left the holes to walk among the skeletal remains. And the forest was without oceans, for the Spirit saw only destruction and pain in the waters, and hovered not above them.

After the end . . . the world was beautiful and good. Light was over the trees, and the Great Spirit was hovering over all He had created. Children played games, and would climb the tall trees endlessly and without fear of the animals that lurked in the jungle darkness. For the beasts were tamed, and the Great Spirit lit a fire so that the children might see the branches and leaves. And a shadow did not fall on the ground, for the fire encompassed all, and did not burn the eyes, nor melt the sand.

And in that day, the elders sang great ballads, and bards and dancers made great art; for the muse was abundant and surrounding. Epic tales were told and retold of the holes, and children told their own children about a ground with cracks, so that no one might forget the beginning. And all knew and understood this thing called mystery. And behold, the mystery was made familiar, and the truth made ponderable.

Sometimes, the chronicles would reach the ear of the Great Spirit, and He would cry just a little; remembering the first children and primeval forests. And from His tears would form a single river, as pure as life, and as clear as the wind.

The river went out to the people, and the elders drank freely of it. The river flowed into the forest, and the children swam and splashed about on its banks. And in that day, which has no end, the Great Spirit rested on the sandy shore to listen to the children's laughter. And He smiled, for it was good.

ALAN GROOMBRIDGE

I JUST HAD THE WEIRDEST THOUGHT
LOOKING AT THE TWILIGHT BLUE SKY
I ADMIRERD ITS BEAUTY
AND ENVIED THE VASTNESS OF ITS MONOTONE COLOR
BUT I ENJOYED THIS BLUENESS
I FELT LIKE PULLING IN THIS RICH BLUE SKY
USING IT AS PAINT ON CANVAS
OR AS CLOTH TO ADORN MYSELF
BLUE EVERYTHING
I HAD THE URGE TO CHEW THE BLUE
IT WAS LIKE GUM OR TURKISH DELIGHT
SKIES ARE BEAUTIFUL
CLOUDS ARE ANOTHER MATTER ENTIRELY

•§•

I WANT YOUR UNDIVIDED ATTENTION,
occasionally.
I WANT TO BE UNDERSTOOD,
by somebody.
I WANT YOUR LOVE,
always.
I NEED TO BE ACKNOWLEDGED,
because
in my mind
i am alone.

DIANA MOSTERT

DID YOU SEE THE MOON TONIGHT?

Did You see the moon
tonight?
No! Well . . .
You missed it then.
It was a half-moon,
and very bright;
even at half.

I didn't see the stars;
but then,
I didn't look for them.
All I saw was the moon.

I watched it all night.
The moon;
Resting on its back—at half.

SARAH JAGT

CAN WE LIVE?

We sat down near the riverside.
Leaned on a mossy log.
Slowly our eyes gathered tears
As we watched the living fog.
“Life is so cruel to us,” we thought.
“Could it be any worse?
To some it is a blessing,
To us it is a curse.”

We heard a scampering by our side,
And saw a little bug;
All red with black spots sitting near
A hole a gopher dug.

A kindly lady bug she was,
She sat down by our side.
She said to us “Oh, please don’t cry.”
“Our eyes are watering,” we lied.

She looked up far, and said to us,
“My children, I know that look.
I had it in my own eyes once,
When death my young child took.”

“It is the look of grief and despair,
A look of giving in.
You ask again and again—‘why me?’
‘Why can’t I ever win?’”

We looked at her and she looked back
With care in her black eyes.
We dropped our gaze and started to cry,
Dewy tears along with sighs.

SARA WEBER

LOOKING INTO YOUR EYES

You long for me to gaze into your eyes
I do
for you
for me a little but mostly for you
It’s not that I don’t love your eyes
because I do
those green laughing eyes that long for mine
are beautiful and alluring
but only for a moment
and then mine look anywhere else in the room
because a gaze
can only last so long
and then it’s warped
into an uncomfortable stare.

SARIN LAWRENCE

AFTER THE STORM

Ragged purple across the misted grey sky
Ripples by the lighter streak of fading sun,
Carried on the gentle winnowing wind.
Warm damp gust of spicy air
Rich with earth, green fragrance, and decaying wood
Lift the thick and heavy grasses:
Nature's throaty chorus in the delicately swaying
 arbours—
A trilling note that trips along
And swells with the rustle of young limbs.
The soft splash of watery emeralds on spongy
 loam
Slipping down the spines of scattered leaves
 and rigid stems,
In the baptism of trembling beauty.

VALERIE VANDENBURG

The words he spoke so carelessly
were like the sharpest sword
that cut across her vision
into her deepest soul

Like the thief who steals and laughs
she robbed him of his pride
Did he not know her soul would bleed
to leave a scar behind?

She hates him for his honesty
she recalls his tender kiss
as tears slip silent down her cheeks
and past her sinful lips



I feel I must question you
 as to why
you took my hand inside of yours,
 and led me quietly
 into another world;
 into blankets of flowers and rolling hills of sun,
and sat me down beside a river
to tell me of your dreams.
Were they all lies?
 and as I told you mine
 were you listening? were you laughing?

Why did you leave me
in a dark, square room
sitting on a musty floor
 with my knees up to my chest.
And allows the enemy to entwine
 his snake-like arms around me?
I would not let him cover my eyes, you know
 or stroke my beating heart.
But as his hands clasped tighter around my throat,
I felt
 that
 I must question you . . .
I feel I must question you

JAMES DE BOER

A SONG IN MY MEMORY

I was mourned that day
"If only I had died instead
of you," he cried out.
Wailing and weeping.
He composed a
song in my memory.
A song.

What need I his song?
his lament for
his precious son? Paper
brittles over time,
and like my
corpse, crumbles
into dust. All that's left
of a prince,
a song on mouldy
parchment, sung by
a defeated king. (The monument
I erected in my
name shall stand forever.)

Once heralded the king. Acclaimed
by the people. I the rightful
ruler, not my father,
weak, foolish man.

My death had
no beauty, no valour.
I hung like
a criminal already
executed.
One. Two. Three.
Only my heirs remain
I died in that tree.

"O Absalom, my son, my son!"

LOVE

Our armies fought hard. Now each uneasy lies
In fitful slumber on this war-torn field.
The quilt defends you like a downy shield,
Guarding and smothering your lonely sighs.
My gentle fingers you reject, as spies
Who use deceit to force heart's gates to yield.
Your face is buried in the blankets, concealed
From reconnaissance, from my bleary eyes.
A tender hand on your delicate hip
Sketches a truce to end this nighttime war,
And gains access to your guarded fortress.
You turn to face me, and bravely I slip
My arm around your waist to underscore
The new peace ratified at our caress.

SEA SIGHS

a pounding wave breaks
on the battered and blown beach
races up and slips back

zephyr soft breezes
tumble sand across desert
etching rock forever

gashing, skyscraping
buildings chisel the dawn sky
like concrete crystals

stream flow gentle
slide slowly along and carve
stone to chasms

words said and words
unsaid erode over time
quietly flow tears

